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# Regular Classroom Teachers' Perceptions of Mainstreaming: One Year After Full-Inclusion

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ED400 Senior Research Seminar

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# Research Questions:

- Have regular classroom teachers changed their views of mainstreaming over the past year?
  - Have they changed their classroom practices in order to accommodate new understandings of mainstreaming?
    - If so, how?
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# Background

- 1997 Amendment of IDEA
    - (Kavale, 2002)
  - In September 2005, all students to be educated in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
  - Definition of Inclusion
    - (Ruef, 2003)
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# Significance

- Research on initial reaction to mainstreaming conducted in Fall 2005
  - Hartford Courant Article: “City Inclusion Effort Brings Serious Problems” February 2006
  - Provide evidence of benefits resulting from this decision as well as suggested changes.
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# School Setting

- Elm Street Elementary School (pseudonym)
    - ❑ Pre-K through 6<sup>th</sup> grade
    - ❑ Total Enrollment: 434 (2005-06)
    - ❑ 97.9% Minority
    - ❑ 73.3% Free/Reduced Lunch
  
  - Classroom Setting
    - ❑ Desks in groups
    - ❑ Reading area
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# Methods

- Qualitative Research Design:
    - Formal interviews with regular and special education teachers
      - 4 Regular Classroom teachers
        - Focus on past and present teaching practices
      - 2 Special Education teachers
        - Focus on perspective of regular classroom teachers adjustment
    - Classroom observations
      - 8 observation hours
        - Focus on teacher-student interaction
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# Thesis

- The initial reaction to the mainstreaming decision described by many regular education teachers was one of shock and an overwhelming feeling of being unprepared for this change.
  - While these teachers do see some potential benefits of mainstreaming, their feelings of preparedness have only slightly changed.
  - The teachers are adapting to this change and are modifying their classroom practices accordingly. However, this adaptation is due to the teachers utilization of resources external to the school system, not from any formal support from the school system.
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# Findings: Initial Reactions

- Reactions of regular classroom teachers:
    - “...I was shocked...and I think it was a shock to the teachers, the special education teachers and the students...” – Ms. Brozena (2<sup>nd</sup> grade)
    - “Let me see, my first reaction? I was shocked because we were put into doing it...immediately, without training.” – Mrs. Smith (2<sup>nd</sup> grade)
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# Findings: Lack of Training

- Fall 2005: Limited training offered
    - Optional Professional Development training offered in the summer of 2005 for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers
    - Discussion of IDEA at Teacher Orientation without any training – 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher
  - Fall 2006: No training
    - “Every other Thursday we pretty much have PD’s and we never receive any training on inclusion, which I think would benefit everyone, even administration” – Ms. Brozena (2<sup>nd</sup> grade)
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# Findings: Adaptation – Live and Learn

- “Now that it is my second year with mainstreaming and I have taught eight different Special Education students with different needs, I feel more prepared for the day-to-day interactions with the students...” – Mr. Johnson (3<sup>rd</sup> grade)
- “I personally feel prepared because I personally have done things to help with [mainstreaming]. If I was going to be honest and say what training or resources [has helped with this transition] – I didn’t get anything.” – Mrs. Smith (2<sup>nd</sup> grade)

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# Findings: Benefits of Mainstreaming

- “I do agree with inclusion, I really do, I just think you need to support the teachers more and for example, have another teacher in the classroom to help out, too.” – Ms. Brozena (2<sup>nd</sup> grade)
  - Every teacher interviewed said that students were benefiting from this change, especially socially.
    - What do you think is the best part of mainstreaming? – All said socialization
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# Conclusions

- The lack of formal support from the school district has lead teachers to seek out alternative ways to accommodate their students with special needs.
- Formal training and support is needed!
  - If the teachers are able to make adjustments for and accommodate their students without formal training, imagine how much better the situation would be if they did have training
- Teachers see benefits of mainstreaming both socially and academically
- Many teachers advocated co-teaching

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# Works Cited

- Kavale, K. (2002). Mainstreaming to Full-Inclusion: from orthogenesis to pathogenesis of an idea. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 49(2), 201-214.
  - Reuf, M. (2003). Including Students with Disabilities: Let's Move Forward Together. *Action in Teacher Education*, 25(1), 1-4.
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